

# ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

A Journey for Small Churches  
In Transition

*Creators:*

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**OVERVIEW OF A  
SMALL CHURCH  
PART TIME MINISTRY  
SEARCH AND CALL PROCESS**

***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***  
A Journey for Small Churches in Transition

**The Small Church TASK**

How do we tell our story - not just to fill out a profile?  
How to give an honest, clear, accurate story to a prospective pastor?  
How do we understand and interpret  
*what is happening in this space  
in order to find our place in the story  
so that we will experience the wholeness  
of who we are and who we can be.*

**Transitional Pastor TASK**

To go into a congregation with love and respect  
Wanting to help make their story known  
To let them know we believe in them  
To be **the mirror holder**

**The Mutual TASK**

It must be a spiritual process  
Rooted in **WORSHIP**  
Reflect on the past and the presence of God and the future  
journey with Jesus.  
How can the consciousness of the congregation be opened by  
what happens on Sunday morning in preparation for  
the Congregational Conversations?  
How can the whole process be designed as happening in a  
context of worship?  
Worship will be focused around the  
Conversation of the Day along with reflection and gathering up the  
previous Conversation

## THE PARTNERS IN MINISTRY

The Congregation (*Leadership, Members, Transition Guidance Team*) Conference Staff, Transitional Pastor, and the Holy Spirit

### Conference Staff:

- Conference staff will meet with the entire congregation as soon as a pastoral vacancy is announced.
- Staff will describe the short-term intensive program and answer questions. Your church will be challenged to consider committing to a new process that will involve all active members and participants.
- If, after prayerful consideration, the church agrees to participate in the program, the Partnership in Ministry Agreement will be signed by all parties.
- The staff person will present a Transitional Pastor who has been trained to facilitate this process; a 6-9 month covenant will be signed.
- The Conference will work closely with the Transitional Pastor as the Congregational Conversations proceed.
- The staff person will present 2-4 names for consideration by the Transitional Team and will be available to offer assistance to the Team as they move toward selecting the candidate for your next called Pastor.

### Transitional Pastor

- Lead Worship and Preach weekly (based on reflecting the scriptures, Congregational Conversations, and emerging learnings)
- Be available for pastor care/shut in visits
- Work with Governing Board and Committees to
  - ✚ *Explore and understand the context for the Congregational Conversations (Month #1)*
  - ✚ *Explore the fiscal, demographic and pastoral compensation realities*
  - ✚ *Create a three year budget to demonstrate sustainability*
- Work with the Transition Team to:
  - ✚ *Prepare for and help facilitate Congregational Conversations*

### Congregation

- Commit to attend six Congregational Conversations and a 7<sup>th</sup> called Congregational Meeting
  - ✚ *Conversations are designed to clarify sense of purpose, mission, and financial reality*
  - ✚ *Conversations will create the 'stuff' of a narrative story/budget to share with prospective future pastors*

### **Governing Board and Committees:**

- Commits to attend six Congregational Conversations and a 7<sup>th</sup> called Congregational Meeting
- Work with the Transitional Pastor to:
  - ✚ *explore the context and purpose for the Congregational Conversations (Month #1)*
  - ✚ *Explore the fiscal, demographic and pastoral compensation realities*
  - ✚ *Create a three year budget to demonstrate sustainability*
- Prepare a presentation on the “Resources to Sustain and Support the Congregational Vision” to the Congregation (as part of Congregational Conversation #6)

### **Transition Guidance Team**

**(3-5 members who will guide the transition from beginning to end)**

- Work with the Transitional Pastor to:
  - ✚ *Prepare for and help facilitate the Congregational Conversations*
- Use the Information gathered from the Congregational Conversations to:
  - ✚ *Create Intentional Worship Bridges between meetings*
  - ✚ *Draft Vision Statement*
  - ✚ *Define Future Pastoral and Membership Expectations*
  - ✚ *Write the Church’s Story*
- Photograph and chronicle the journey
  - ✚ *Create a Celebration display*
- Interview Pastoral Candidates
- Recommend a single candidate to the Congregation

## THE PROPOSED TIME LINE

(Subject to the rhythm of local church life and the church year)

### Preparation prior to arrival

- The Governing Board will appoint the Transition Guidance Team of 3-5 church members
- The Governing Board, the Transitional Guidance Team and the Transitional Pastor will get acquainted with the congregation's historical documents
  - ✚ *Five years of Annual Reports including financial reports*
  - ✚ *Copy of the Church Constitution and Bylaws*
  - ✚ *A sampling of Worship bulletins*
  - ✚ *A sampling of Newsletters*
  - ✚ *Several years of Governing Board, Deacon and Trustee minutes*
- The Transitional Pastor will meet with the Governing Board and the Transitional Guidance Team to plan ahead:
  - ✚ *Get acquainted*
  - ✚ *Clarity of Expectations*
  - ✚ *Transitional Pastor Covenant*
  - ✚ *Study of historical documents*

### First Sunday

- Conference staff accompanies the Transitional Pastor to Worship
  - ✚ *Liturgy to commission the Transitional Pastor, Transitional Guidance Team and the Congregation to this journey of **Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***
  - ✚ *A Potluck Lunch is shared with an introduction to 'Continuing Congregational Conversations'*

**Month #1** – Making a space so that the rest of the process has the best chance to succeed

- Recognizing that the Transitional Pastor is walking into a conversation that is already taking place
  - ✚ The Transitional Pastor will preach and visit and listen
    - What particular needs and questions are arising?*
    - Identify people and their leadership*
  - ✚ Work with the Transition Guidance Team to create space for processing, reflecting and owning the information gathered in the Congregational Conversations
    - Prepare for each Congregational Conversation*
    - De-brief each Conversation*
    - What did we hear?*
    - Prepare the material in a way it can be reality tested at the next Conversation*
    - Clean up newsprint notes and display the following week for additional information*
    - Weave what was heard and learned into the liturgy for the following Sunday – Call to Worship/litany/prayer/ benediction*
- Work with the Governing Board and Committees
  - ✚ Explore the fiscal, demographic and pastoral compensation realities

## **PHASE ONE**

(Conversations may take place every two to three weeks)

### ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God A Journey for Small Churches in Transition***

#### **Congregational Conversation #1**

##### **Meeting Our Church Again For The First Time**

Scriptural Focus: *Luke 24:30-32*

Conversational Focus: *Building a Covenant for Behavior for working together through the transition process*

#### **Congregational Conversation #2**

##### **Be Not Afraid to Enter the Future**

Scriptural Focus: *Exodus 14:13-14, Isaiah 40:1-5, Isaiah 43:1*

Congregational Focus: *Creating a Historical Time Line – Naming Treasures and Hopes*

#### **Congregational Conversation #3**

##### **Following Jesus Forward**

Scriptural Focus: *John 21:15-19*

Congregational Focus: *Naming defining stories and persisting values of the congregation*

#### **Congregational Conversation #4**

##### **Who Is Our Neighbor?**

Scriptural Focus: *Luke 10:29b-37*

Congregational Focus: *Naming our mission/passion/outreach - present and future*

#### **Congregational Conversation #5**

##### **Discerning our Purpose and Identity**

Scriptural Focus: *I Corinthians 12:12-20, 25*

Congregational Focus: *Name Five Significant Things we can say about Who We Are*

#### **Congregational Conversation #6**

##### **Discerning Leadership Change**

Scriptural Focus: *Acts 1:15, 21-26*

Congregational Focus: *Facing fiscal realities and naming the shape and character of the church's expectation for ministry of the next pastor and the congregation*

## **PHASE TWO**

### **THE WORK OF THE TRANSITIONAL GUIDANCE TEAM** *(two to four weeks)*

- Out of all the material that has been gathered, ‘reality tested’ and then tweaked at the Congregational Conversations over the last six weeks
  - ✚ Prepare a final Vision Statement
  - ✚ Name the Goals and Intentions for moving forward
  - ✚ Prepared a Covenant for Partnership in Ministry with a new pastor
    - With clarity of Ministerial Expectations*
    - With clarity of Congregational Expectations*
    - With Compensation Package provided by Governing Board*
  - ✚ Complete the Document “Telling Our Story”
- For the Sunday of the Congregational Meeting and Congregational Conversation #7 create a Litany that shares the most important information that “Telling Our Story” will share with the world about who our church is and what it does and where it is going

### **Congregational Conversation #7**

A CALLED CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

**How/What is it that we do?**

Scriptural Focus: *Acts 2:1-12*

Congregational Focus: *What is our story for the future?*

APPROVAL: Vision Statement

Goals and Intentions for moving forward

Ministerial Expectations

Compensation Package

Telling our Story

### **SUNDAY WORSHIP THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY**

- Lift up your approved Congregational “Telling Our Story” as your congregation’s prayer for your future and offer it to God to guide your congregation forward.



## **PHASE THREE**

- Conference staff will meet with Transition Guidance Team to prepare for interviews and receiving pastoral profiles
- The Transition Guidance Team will read profiles, interview candidates and will ultimately recommend a single candidate to the Congregation

### **IN GOD'S GOOD TIME**

- There will be a Congregational Meeting to call a candidate to be your pastor
- A new chapter of faithful ministry will begin

# RESOURCES FOR THE JOURNEY

Partnership in Ministry Agreement  
For Conference, Congregation and Transitional Pastor

A Covenant with a Transitional Pastor

Liturgy to Commission  
The Transitional Pastor, the Transition Guidance Team, and the  
Congregation to this journey of ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

‘Telling our Story’

Liturgy for lifting up ‘Telling the Story’ as a Prayer for our Future

A ‘Covenant for Partnership In Ministry’ with a new pastor

***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***  
**A Covenant between the Vermont Conference, a Congregation and a  
Transitional Pastor**  
**A Partnership in Ministry Agreement**

As \_\_\_\_\_ begins the Journey for a Small Church in Transition seeking new pastoral leadership, we, the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, do covenant together in the following ways:

**Conference Staff:**

- Conference staff will meet with the entire congregation as soon as a pastoral vacancy is announced.
- Staff will describe the short-term intensive program and answer questions. Your church will be challenged to consider committing to a new process that will involve all active members and participants.
- If, after prayerful consideration, the church agrees to participate in the program, the Partnership in Ministry Agreement will be signed by all parties.
- The staff person will present a Transitional Pastor who has been trained to facilitate this process; a 5-6 month covenant will be signed.
- The Conference will work closely with the Transitional Pastor as the Congregational Conversations proceed.
- The staff person will present 2-4 names for consideration by the Transition Guidance Team and will be available to offer assistance to the Team as they move toward selecting your candidate.

**Transitional Pastor**

- Lead Worship and Preach weekly (based on reflecting the Scriptures, Congregational Conversations, and emerging learnings)
- Be available for pastoral care/shut in visits
- Work with Governing Board and Committees to
  - ✚ *Explore and understand the context for the Congregational Conversations (Month #1)*
  - ✚ *Explore the fiscal, demographic and pastoral compensation realities*
  - ✚ *Create a three year budget to demonstrate sustainability*
- Work with the Transition Guidance Team to:
  - ✚ *Prepare for and help facilitate Congregational Conversations*

**Congregation:**

- Commits to attend at least six Congregational Conversations and a seventh called Congregational Meeting
  - ✚ *Conversations are designed to clarify sense of purpose, mission, and financial reality*
  - ✚ *Conversations will create the 'stuff' of a narrative story/budget to share with prospective future pastors*

**Governing Board and Committees:**

- Commit to attend at least six Congregational Conversations and a seventh called Congregational Meeting
- Work with the Transitional Pastor to:
  - ✚ *explore the context and purpose for the Congregational Conversations (Month #1)*
  - ✚ *Explore the fiscal, demographic and pastoral compensation realities*
  - ✚ *Create a three year budget to demonstrate sustainability*
- Prepare a presentation on the “Resources to Sustain and Support the Congregational Vision” to the Congregation (as part of Congregational Conversation #6)

**Transition Guidance Team**

**(3-5 members who will guide the transition from beginning to end)**

- Work with the Transitional Pastor to:
  - ✚ *Prepare for and help facilitate the Congregational Conversations*
  - ✚ *To communicate with the Congregation an on-going process to inform and sustain energy*
- Use the Information gathered from the Congregational Conversations to:
  - ✚ *Create Intentional Worship Bridges between meetings*
  - ✚ *Draft Vision Statement*
  - ✚ *Define Future Pastoral and Membership Expectations*
  - ✚ *Write the Church’s Story*
- Photograph and chronicle the journey
  - ✚ *Create a Celebration display*
- Interview Pastoral Candidates
- Recommend a single candidate to the Congregation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Conference/Association Staff Person

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Local Church Moderator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Transitional Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

## **A COVENANT WITH A TRANSITIONAL PASTOR**

The following covenant is made between the \_\_\_\_\_ Church of \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

It is for the purpose of providing Transitional Pastoral Leadership during a period of transition. It is agreed that \_\_\_\_\_ will begin as Transitional Pastor of \_\_\_\_\_ church on \_\_\_\_\_ for a period of \_\_\_\_\_ (six months-nine months).

It is agreed that \_\_\_\_\_ will provide pastoral leadership \_\_\_\_\_ ( ½ time - two days a week plus Sunday AM) (¼ time – one day a week plus Sunday AM)

- Lead Worship and Preach weekly (based on reflecting the Scriptures, Congregational Conversations, and emerging learnings)
- Be available for pastoral care/shut in visits
- Work with Governing Board and Committees to
  - ✚ *Explore and understand the context for the Congregational Conversations (Month #1)*
  - ✚ *Explore the fiscal, demographic and pastoral compensation realities*
  - ✚ *Create a three year budget to demonstrate sustainability*
- Work with the Transition Guidance Team to:
  - ✚ *Prepare for and help facilitate Congregational Conversations*

It is understood that under no circumstances may the Transitional Pastor be a candidate for the position of settled Pastor. The \_\_\_\_\_ church understands that under no circumstances will they seek to encourage the Transitional Pastor to candidate for the Settled Pastor's position.

The Covenant may be extended for an additional period of time if necessary. Either party, with a written 30 day notice, may terminate it at any time.

The compensation for this agreement shall be that in the TERMS OF CALL

### TERMS OF CALL

The \_\_\_\_\_ Church agrees to provide compensation in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_. (see attached Guidelines)<sup>1</sup> (Does not include Paid Benefits which are in addition)

<sup>1</sup> Based on Vermont Conference Ministerial Compensation Guidelines and pro-rated for less than full time ministry

In consultation with the Transitional Pastor this amount will be designated as follows:

Cash Salary of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month  
Housing allowance \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month<sup>2</sup>

Social Security offset @ 7.65%    \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Annuity Contribution                 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Health and Dental Insurance         \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Benefits

Paid Vacation (4 weeks)

(accrued at one week for every three months of service)

Mileage Reimbursement @ IRS rate                         \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Attendance at Clergy Convocation<sup>3</sup>                         \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Attendance at Conference Annual Meeting<sup>4</sup>                 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Reimbursement for Criminal Background Check    \$ \_\_\_\_\_180.00\_\_\_\_\_

A Copy of this Covenant and Terms of Call will be signed and given to:

The Local Church

The Transitional Pastor

The Church and Ministry Committee or Ministerial Standing and  
Standards Committee

The Associate Conference Minister

\_\_\_\_\_

The Transitional Pastor	Date
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\_\_\_\_\_

For the Local Church	Date
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<sup>2</sup> per IRS Guidelines, this amount may not exceed the actual costs of your housing, utilities, maintenance and furnishings

<sup>3</sup> If the event falls during the time the Transitional Pastor is serving

<sup>4</sup> If the event falls during the time the Transitional Pastor is serving

**Compensation Worksheet for Use by a Local Church Search Committee**  
**Church membership up to 100**  
**Sample Part-Time 2014 Rates-With Housing Allowance**

<b><u>WORKSHEET - Clergy Compensation</u></b>	<b>½ time min comp</b>		<b>¼ time min comp</b>	
1. Cash Salary	<b>15,387</b>		<b>7,694</b>	
2. a).Housing Allowance (40% of Salary)	<b>6,155</b>		<b>3,078</b>	
<b>TOTAL 1 and 2 = "SALARY BASIS"</b>	<b>21,542</b>		<b>10,772</b>	
3. Annuity Fund (14% of salary basis)	<b>3,016</b>		<b>1,508</b>	
4. Life Insurance and Disability Income Plan (1.5% of salary basis)	<b>323</b>		<b>162</b>	
5. Toward Minister's Self-Employed Social Security/Medicare Tax (7.65% of salary basis)	<b>1,648</b>		<b>824</b>	
6. Family Hospitalization and Medical Insurance -UCC-1 Adult over 40*	<b>3,908</b>		<b>1,954</b>	
7. Family Dental Insurance – 1 adult w/child*	<b>480</b>		<b>240</b>	
8.				
9.				
<b>TOTAL COMPENSATION With Housing Allowance</b>	<b>30,917</b>		<b>15,460</b>	

Does not include ministry expenses such as continuing ed, travel, meetings, moving, etc. or \$180 reimbursement for CBC  
 \*Rates will vary-figures used for example for Plan A at ½ and ¼ of total of \$7,815 for full-time 1 Adult non-medicare, over 40

# ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

## **A Liturgy of Commissioning**

### **The Journey Begins**

(A liturgy for the Transitional Pastor's first Sunday – at the end of worship – on the way to the Pot-Luck Lunch and First Sunday Gathering. Preparations require a small table, a trash bag, a dishtowel, a Bible, a candle and a blank copy of 'Telling our Story'. This Table and its setting should be moved to the space where the Congregational Conversations will be held and the candle lit as each conversation begins.)

#### CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE

Hear these words from the apostle Paul: My sisters and brothers, I want you to know the truth about gifts from the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them.

#### PEOPLE

There are different ways of serving, but the same God is served.

#### CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE

There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to each of us for our particular service.

#### PEOPLE

The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.<sup>1</sup> Together we are the body of Christ on a journey. Today we begin.

### **SETTING THE TABLE**

#### CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE

Tables are at the center of our lives as a church.

We gather in worship around a communion table – where we recognize Jesus in the breaking of bread – and our souls are nourished.

We gather in fellowship around dining tables – where pot-luck strengthens our bodies and friendships.

We gather in prayer and study around tables of discovery – where our hearts listen for God's still-speaking voice .

We gather around tables of meeting, minutes and budgets – where our minds seek to discern God's call for our congregations in this particular time and place.

This table is an empty table. As you begin ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God*** this table will hold what you need for the journey. As a community with a past and a present you will be invited to meet your church again as if for the first time. You will identify and

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:1,4-7, *Good News Bible*, adapted.



choose the treasures you want to carry with you into the future – and you will also identify some worn-out things it would be better to leave behind!

*(shake out a big trash bag and place it on the table)*

TRANSITIONAL PASTOR *(placing a dishtowel on the table)*

You are a congregation rooted in a community. We cover this table with a dishtowel to remind us of our opportunities to serve others. You will open your doors and see your neighborhood as if for the first time. In this time of transition you will identify the ways in which you are making a difference in people's lives and perhaps discover a new thing God might be calling you to do.

A DEACON *(placing a Bible on the table)*

We cannot ***Lean Forward into the Kingdom of God*** without rooting ourselves in God's Word.

MEMBER OF TRANSITION GUIDANCE TEAM *(placing a candle on the table and lighting it)*

We cannot ***Lean Forward into the Kingdom of God*** without the light of Jesus to guide the journey.

A TRUSTEE *(placing an offering plate on the table)*

We cannot ***Lean Forward into the Kingdom of God*** without a willingness to love God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength. This is the offering God desires.

MODERATOR *(placing a copy of 'Telling our Story' on the table)*

We are a community with a future. At this moment we do not know where this journey will lead us. But we trust that God holds our future. And so we place on this table a blank copy of 'Telling our Story' – yet to be written.

GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS

We are a community with a reality. We are small in numbers – but vibrant in faith. We are few in dollars but reach out to serve our neighbors in countless ways. We commit ourselves to honestly explore our fiscal, demographic and pastoral compensation reality. We will present to the congregation a report on 'Our Resources to Sustain and Support the Congregational Vision' as it emerges.

PEOPLE

So we, who are many, recognize that our one part time pastor will not be able to accomplish all ministerial needs in our church and community. We commit ourselves to clarify the most important needs which will claim our pastor's abilities, gifts and time. And we commit ourselves to naming those needs which will claim OUR abilities, gifts and time.

#### TRANSITIONAL PASTOR

I commit myself to enter into your congregation with love and respect – to be with you in worship and your congregational conversations. I will listen to your stories –ask questions – and help you see your possibilities as God sees you.

#### TRANSITIONAL GUIDANCE TEAM MEMBERS

We commit ourselves to walk with all of you as together we gain clarity about our identity, purpose and mission. We promise to reflect back to you what we are learning about ourselves, our neighbors and our faith - so that we will be able to honestly ‘Tell Our Story’ as we seek our next pastor.

#### MODERATOR

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function,

#### PEOPLE

...so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us:

LEFT ...prophecy,  
RIGHT ...in proportion to faith;  
LEFT ...ministry,  
RIGHT ...in ministering;  
LEFT ...the teacher,  
RIGHT ...in teaching;  
LEFT ...the exhorter,  
RIGHT ...in exhortation;  
LEFT ...the giver,  
RIGHT ...in generosity;  
LEFT ...the leader,  
RIGHT ...in diligence;  
LEFT ...the compassionate,  
RIGHT ...in cheerfulness.<sup>2</sup>

#### PEOPLE

We commit ourselves to this journey of discovery. We commit ourselves to engaging in all the Congregational Conversations – to tell our stories – to listen thoughtfully to one another - to be honest about who we have been – and prayerful about who we might become by God’s grace. We will pray daily that our vision for the future might become clear.

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 12:4-8

## CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE

Hear these words from the apostle Paul: At all times make it your aim to do good to one another and to all people. Be joyful always, pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants of you, in your life in Christ Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

On behalf of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ, I witness to the words of commitment spoken today.

It is a joy for the Vermont Conference to be partners with you in the service of Jesus Christ. We promise to hold you in prayer, to honor your commitment to this journey of ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***. We commit ourselves to walk with you to equip and empower you in your continuing journey to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ in this community.

God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. This church has a past and a present that has seen laughter and tears, hopes and disappointments. Yet this Church is called into a future yet unknown. Guide them as they hold cherished memories but move in new directions as they journey forward in faith working to build a corner of your Kingdom in this community. in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

*(pg. 258 UCC Book of Worship adapted)*

**HYMN** NCH #495 Called as Partners in Christ's Service

## BENEDICTION

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18, *Good News Bible*, adapted.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR TELLING YOUR STORY TO POTENTIAL CANDIDATES

We are a Community with a Past, Present, and Future

Your members have experienced a profound journey of exploration and self-reflection during this period of transition. You have prayed and studied together, and you have learned a great deal about one another and about your church community. Now it is time for the Transition Guidance Team to prepare a document that will assist candidates who might consider submitting an application for your pastoral vacancy.

As you prepare different segments of your document, you may wish to invite feedback from your transitional pastor. As you know, strict confidentiality in the search process is essential; while it will be unethical for your pastor to have conversation with your committee about the individual names of potential candidates, it is perfectly appropriate to discuss this document with the pastor. After all, you have been on this unique journey together, and the transitional pastor may have suggestions that will contribute to the development of this document.

BE CREATIVE! You may write the document in the form of a narrative, simply beginning with some kind of opening statement (using your own words), *“We have been through a unique faith journey in recent months, and we are eager to tell you our story.”* Another suggestion is to tell your story in the form of a letter to a potential candidate. . If you decide to write a letter, again using your own words, you might consider a salutation such as, *“To persons who may feel called by God to consider applying for the pastoral vacancy at \_\_\_\_\_ Church:”*

Whatever format you choose, the writing style should be casual; remember that you are telling another person the story of the church you love. If you decide to ask different members of your group to compose different sections, be certain that the “best” writer and editor among you then edits the document for consistency of voice and tone. You may find it necessary to use more than one paragraph for some sections, but try to create a document that is as brief as possible while still including the essentials.

The narrative will be composed of seven major topics or areas. Instructions for each paragraph will include references to your transition documents as well as open-ended statements to assist your writing process. These statements are designed to offer a useful guide to themes that could be included in that section. It is not necessary to include every single suggested item, but do choose the ones that will help tell the story of the insights you have discovered during this transition process. By reading your document through to the end, a potential candidate should have a picture of the unique characteristics of your church and a sense of your vision of where God is leading you as you move into the future

### Paragraph One: Our Unique History and Our Future

To compose your opening paragraph, refer to Congregational Conversation #2 (“**Be Not Afraid to Enter the Future.**”) You have a wealth of material from your timeline and your newsprint list of “treasures and hopes.”

*Our church has a unique history because....*

*Our most challenging faith experience/event has been....*

*One thing we do particularly well is....*

*We believe it is important to carry the following into the future....*

*We would love to leave the following behind...*

*We believe God is calling us to....*

### Paragraph Two: A Snapshot of our Congregation

This paragraph will be based on Congregational Conversation #1 (“**Meeting Our Church Again for the First Time**”). We suggest you attach your congregational covenant to the final document.

*During an average six week period, the total number of different individuals who would customarily attend at least one worship service would be ...*

*Number of church members and active participants...*

*Here is a snapshot of our active participants (average age, children/youth, “old-timers and newcomers,” etc) ...*

*Excluding immediate family members, we estimate that \_\_\_\_\_ percent of our active participants are related to others in the congregation ...*

*Among our active participants, there are \_\_\_\_\_ (actual number) persons who participate in Association or Conference activities ....*

### Paragraph Three: “A Look at our Community”

This paragraph will be based on Congregational Conversation #4 (“**Who is our Neighbor?**”) You may want to refer to the results of your neighborhood interviews, your congregational “windshield survey,” and the list of neighborhood needs identified during Conversation #4. Include phone numbers with the names of your community references; consult them beforehand to make certain they are willing to serve in this way.

*We usually describe our town/community this way ...*

*We envision these changes in our community in the next few years...*

*The major challenges facing our community are ...*

*We believe our church may help address these challenges by ...*

*Community residents (who are not affiliated with the church) see our church as ...*

*Our church building is used by the community in the following ways ...*

*Other churches/religious centers in our town are ...*

*Here are the names of three non-church members who could be phoned and asked about their perspective on our church ...*

#### Paragraph Four: A Look at Worship and Education

During the transition period, your congregation has experienced unique worship services that connected thematically with the congregational conversations. This paragraph offers an opportunity for you to share—with your potential candidates—information about aspects of your worship services that you particularly value. Please attach a bulletin from a Sunday service. You may also want to review Congregational Conversation #6 (“**Discerning Leadership Change.**”)

*We value sermons that ...*

*We have some traditional worship services that are important to our members ...*

*Hymnals and musical instruments we customarily use ...*

*We serve communion on ...*

*Visitors feel welcome to our worship services because ...*

*Six qualities we particularly value in our pastor ...*

*Most important needs for ministry that will claim our pastor’s abilities, gifts, time ...*

*We offer these formal or informal educational events for children, youth, and adults...*

#### Paragraph Five: Who We Are

For this paragraph you will want to refer to Congregational Conversations #3 (“**Following Jesus Forward**”) and #5 (“**Discerning our Purpose and Identity**”). Attach your vision statement.

*We believe God is calling us to ...*

*These are the resources/gifts we bring to this ministry ...*

*Five significant things that can be said about who we are as a congregation ...*

*Decisions are made and work gets done in our church in the following ways ...*

*We resolved a situation of conflict in our church by ...*

*We have discussed/not discussed the Open & Affirming Process ...*

*We have made changes to improve handicapped accessibility ...*

#### Paragraph Six: How We Serve Others

Churches often use different language to refer to the material in this section: “Mission,” “Outreach,” “Justice and Witness,” or “Church in Society” may be identifying words. Here you describe the ways you reach out to others--in your community, your nation, and your world. Congregational Conversation #5 (“**Discerning our Purpose and Identity**”) may be helpful, especially your list of “Five significant things that can be said about who we are.”)

*Our most exciting recent mission project has been ...*

*For many years we have supported ...*

*Our other local, national, and global mission efforts are ...*

*We have been involved in social justice advocacy in the following areas ...*

*We designate \$\_\_\_\_\_ annually for OCWM (Our Church’s Wider Mission)...*

*We contribute to the following UCC special offerings (One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, Strengthen the Church, and The Christmas Fund) ...*

## Paragraph Seven: Supporting Our Ministry

Refer to your recent Annual Report for some of this information.

*Here is a brief summary of our current annual church budget... (sources of income, expenses)*

*Our church assets are... (property, investments)*

*Here is a description of our church building ... (or buildings....)*

*Our last capital campaign was ... (year/purpose/amount raised)*

*The salary and benefits we offer are described in the attached covenant...*

## Closing

You will want to close the document with a few statements about your excitement as you look to the future.

Remind the candidates that they should notify Lynn Thomas ([thomasl@vtcucc.org](mailto:thomasl@vtcucc.org); 802-728-4999) if they wish to submit an application. List the names of your Transition Guidance Team with an email and phone contact for the person who is serving as chair.

***“For surely I know the plans I have for you,  
says the Lord,  
plans for your welfare and not for harm,  
to give you a future with hope.”  
Jeremiah 29:11***

# ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God*** **A LITURGY FOR LIFTING UP ‘TELLING OUR STORY’**

## **As a Responsive Prayer for our Future**

*(loosely based on the end of I Chronicles and the beginning of II Chronicles  
in The Message)*

### **PART ONE**

“YES – GOD IS GOOD!

**All the time – YES – GOD IS GOOD!**

All the time. *“God has told us that no one can see God.*

***Yet God’s people built this church to mark God’s invisible presence forever in this place.***

*Can it be that God actually moved into our neighborhood?*

***Why the cosmos itself isn’t large enough to give God breathing room – let alone this sacred space.***

*Even so, we are bold to ask: Pay attention to these our prayers, O God, our God.*

***O God, my God, listen to our prayers, energetic and devout, that we’re setting before you right now.***

*Keep your eyes open to this sanctuary day and night – this place you honor with your name and your presence.*

***Listen to your people when they pray in this place.”***

*(II Chron. 6:18ff)*

### **PART TWO**

*“This is not just a place to meet each other, but a house for God to meet us.*

***We would serve God with a whole heart and eager mind, for God examines every heart and sees through every motive. If we seek God – God will make sure we find the One who still calls out to us.***

*(I Chron. 28:9)*

In thanksgiving for all who have labored to build and maintain this holy space, for those who have preached God’s Word from this pulpit, for those who have come seeking God, who brought children to meet God, who married sweethearts and who have buried their dear ones and who have lived out their faith in Jesus Christ in word and deed.

**We seek to keep that faith alive.**

### **LAYING ON OF HANDS**

*(On behalf of the congregation the Transitional Guidance Team holds ‘Telling our Story’ as each adds their hand as they speak these prayers.)*

- 1** ...With prayer and conversation, with worship and scripture, with story and newsprint we have gathered to dream and imagine, to ask questions and wonder – to listen to God and one another – and discover our common vision plain and clear –



- 2 ...by the grace of God we pray that this holy space will continue to be a place where children and seekers, the grieving and the joyful will find companions on the journey of life and a reason to follow the way of Jesus in word and deed -
- 3 ...by the grace of God we seek a Pastor who will join us as we are ***Leaning Forward into God's Kingdom*** for this new day -
- 4 ...whose heart and energy will join our hearts and energies as we seek to live into our vision -
- 5 ...and so we offer God this 'Story' of who we have been and who we are praying to become'. This is our prayer for our future.

(All the People)

***"Our God says to us: 'Take heart! Don't be anxious or get discouraged. I am with you. I will not walk off and leave you in the lurch. I will give you uncluttered and focused hearts so that you may live by my direction and counsel as you brighten this corner of God's Kingdom where you live. I will be at your side until all you have been called to do is completed.'" Amen and Amen***

*(I Chron. 28:20, 29:19)*

### PART THREE

YES – *God is good!*

**All the time – *God is good!***

All the time! In thanksgiving for all that is past – for all that is yet to come we re-dedicate this sacred space and ourselves - to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to work toward your kingdom of justice and peace, to extend extravagant welcome, to make safe space for all who seek and question and wonder –

[\*

**May we be a church of joy and laughter -**

A Church of renewal and refreshment for those who are weary –

**A Church of hope for those who have been disillusioned –**

A Church of healing and comfort for those broken and hurt –

**A Church of forgiveness for those who seek a new way of life –**

A Church of encouragement for those who hunger and thirst for justice and peace.

**A Church of vision and inspiration for all who seek a new and better way for your world.**

\*]¹

And God says, *"I am alert to the prayers offered in this place. Believe me, I have chosen and sanctified this sacred space. My name is stamped upon it forever, my eyes are on it and my heart is in it always. YES – God is good!*

*(II Chron. 7:15-16)*

**YES – GOD IS GOOD!**

All the time.

**Amen and Amen**

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¹ This section should be re-written to reflect the words and phrases in your Vision Statement and 'Telling Our Story'

HYMN

***“This Is Our Prayer”***

Tune: Finlandia

Words: Chris Heintz

This is our prayer of who we hope to be.  
Our hopes and Dreams for what is soon to come.

This is our past, the fear we leave behind,  
We let it go, new worlds we wish to see.  
We lift our hearts, O God, to thee we pray,  
Your Kingdom come, for us the coming day.

We are your church, a beacon on this hill,  
Welcome and care, Your love we wish to share.  
We look to you, O God to bring us someone  
To walk with us, our faithful hearts instill.  
These words we raise, mundane yet so sublime,  
Infuse in them your Spirit for our time.

Our varied paths have brought us here today.  
No two alike, yet seeking, we lay hands,  
Upon these words, written from deep within,  
To bless and send them on their faithful way.  
We pray, O God, that they will bring us someone  
To grow with us, and in your love be one. Amen.

## ***Leaning Forward Into the Kingdom of God*** **Small Church Pastoral Call Agreement**

On this day, \_\_\_\_\_, in \_\_\_\_\_, having sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit and believing that God has called us to share in a mutual and common ministry in Christ, the members of \_\_\_\_\_ United Church of Christ at a regularly-called meeting, held on \_\_\_\_\_, voted to enter into covenant with you, a servant of God, to become pastor and teacher of this church beginning on \_\_\_\_\_.

### **I. TERMS OF CALL**

This is an agreement between \_\_\_\_\_ United Church of Christ in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ called as Pastor. All parties execute this agreement in good faith.

The terms of call outlined in this agreement are contingent upon your holding Licensed Ministerial Standing with the \_\_\_\_\_ Association of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ. Should Licensed Ministerial Standing be suspended, revoked, for any reason, this agreement can be terminated immediately.

Believing that the cause and mission of Christ's church will be forwarded under your pastoral and spiritual leadership, we join in this agreement.

Our church calls you to accept this pastoral office by recognizing and acknowledging with us the responsibilities and duties as our pastor, including those described in our Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of this church and those by the customs and usages of the pastoral office of the United Church of Christ as defined in the *United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry*, (particularly sub-sections entitled, "The Local Church in Relation to Its Pastor," and "The Licensed Minister's Code," which include the right and responsibility of participation and leadership in the mission of the United Church of Christ, the ecumenical church, and the community.)

As a congregation, we wholeheartedly commit ourselves to the following terms of the covenant as we call you to be pastor and teacher. The terms of this agreement are for a part-time commitment, which although there will be fluctuations, we expect (10) (20) hours per week to be adequate to meet the terms of this agreement.

### **II. Criminal Background Check**

Our church will reimburse you in the amount of \$180.00 for the cost of your required Criminal Background Check document.

***Our church recognizes that to call forth the gifts God has given you to lead our church faithfully, we must provide both resources and support that will assist you in remaining vital, creative, and energetic for this ministry on our behalf. Therefore, our church will provide you the following pastoral ministry support and reimbursement for expenses incurred while you are conducting ministry on behalf of this church.***

### **III. COMPENSATION**

Because our church is committed to fair and just compensation, we honor our God and one another by providing the following financial care. All figures listed in this section are annual amounts, based on the Vermont Conference Ministerial Compensation Guidelines and will be pro-rated during the remainder of the current budget year.

Beginning on \_\_\_\_\_, our church will pay \$\_\_\_\_\_ annually. The treasurer of our church will make these payments on a \_\_\_\_\_ (frequency of payroll cycle) basis.

In consultation with the Pastor this amount will be designated as follows:

Cash Salary \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Housing Allowance \$ \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup>  
Annuity Plan \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Health and Dental Plan \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Life Insurance and Disability Income Plan \$ \_\_\_\_\_

In addition

1. Our church will compensate you for the portion of Social Security and Medicare we would pay if you were permitted by the IRS to be paid as an employee of the church. This amount is the percentage established annually by the IRS. The current percentage equals 7.65% of salary and housing allowance, and will be paid to you on a quarterly basis.

We have budgeted \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for SS offset

2. Our church will reimburse you at the IRS mileage rate established each year, for using your automobile in fulfilling the duties of the pastoral office. It is your responsibility to keep of log of mileage for appropriate services.

We have budgeted \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for mileage

3. Our church values your participation in the wider church. Thus we will support your attendance in the Vermont Conference Annual Meeting and Clergy Convocation and Association Meetings.

We have budgeted \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for meeting expenses

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<sup>1</sup> Per IRS Guidelines, housing allowance cannot exceed the costs of your housing, all utilities, maintenance and furnishings

4. Our church encourages and supports your opportunities to participate in continuing education programs to strengthen your ministry in this church.  
We have budgeted \$\_\_\_\_\_for continuing education

#### **IV. WEEKLY SCHEDULE, VACATION, FAMILY AND COMPASSIONATE LEAVE**

##### **Weekly Schedule**

Recognizing that the demands of church life come at all hours of the day and night, we also recognize that a part-time ministry of (10) (20) hours has its limits. We agree that these are the priorities for our Pastor's time:

1

2

3

4

5

Other tasks will be the responsibility of the members of the church or negotiated separately with a stipend of \$\_\_\_\_\_a hour provided:

1

2

3

4

5

##### **Vacation**

Our church provides you 4 weeks of vacation leave during each 12 months of service. The congregation is responsible for our church programs, worship life and each other during your vacation.

##### **Parental Leave**

Parental leave is extended if you and your family experience the birth or adoption of a child. You will receive up to six weeks of unpaid family leave so that you can care

for self and family. Parental leave does not accrue and unused leave is not payable upon termination.

### **Personal/Compassionate Leave**

Our church realizes that life is not always predictable or within our control. Therefore, in the event of special circumstances, compassionate leave is available. We understand special circumstances to include the death of an immediate family member, sickness, or personal crisis to be determined by the need. Compassionate leave does not accrue and unused compassionate leave is not payable upon termination.

## **V. REVIEW OF PASTORAL CALL AGREEMENT**

Through our Church Council/Governing Board and in accordance with our church's budget cycle, the church will negotiate with you, annually, to update this agreement, keeping in mind increases in the cost-of-living, possible merit increases in salary, and consequent increases in benefits based on salary and housing.

## **VI. TAKING THE PULSE OF OUR CHURCH'S MINISTRY**

Our church accepts its responsibility to live faithfully and in covenant with you, our pastor and teacher. Accordingly, we covenant to hold informal congregational conversations (with notes taken) every three months based upon review and evaluation of how we are doing in addressing the priorities and hopes named in 'Telling Our Story'. At the end of our first year together and every year thereafter, we covenant to review the total ministry of our church and reassess the priorities and hopes for the coming year.

## **VII. MEDIATION PROCEDURES**

Our church acknowledges that even as we pledge our faithfulness to God, one another and you, there may be times when difficulties within our relationship begin to overwhelm us. In those instances, we covenant with you to seek the support, advice, and wisdom of our Conference Staff, in order that we actively work to maintain the goodness of our relationship and the goodness God has placed within it.

## **VIII. TERMINATION OF PASTORAL CALL**

Our church recognizes that relationships are always changing and that many reasons can lead to a separation. Thus, either party can terminate this pastoral call agreement giving at least 60 days' written notice to the other or upon other terms to which we both mutually agree.

## IX. FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PULPIT

Notwithstanding any of the other responsibilities outlined for our pastor in the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of this church or in the other resources referenced on the first page of this document, in accepting pastoral leadership we also accept your freedom of expression in the pulpit as it pertains to matters of faith and faithfulness according to the insight of scripture, the work of the Holy Spirit, the traditions of the United Church of Christ, and the context in which we live our lives.

### AGREEMENT

In witness thereof, we have signed our names on this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_.

For the congregation:

**Moderator:** (Signature) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Pastor-Elect's Acceptance:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

-----  
Having witnessed the covenant between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to enter into this pastoral call agreement, we affirm and celebrate the ministerial covenant undertaken on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

### Vermont Conference Representative:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Four copies; one each to the following:*

*Pastor-Elect  
Association Church and Ministry Committee  
Conference Minister  
Local Church*

## *Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God*

### The First Sunday Gathering

around a Pot-Luck Lunch to introduce Congregational Conversations and  
'Telling our Story'

### AN ONGOING CONVERSATION

#### SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:13-19a: That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?"

#### LITURGY

One: We have walked along the faithful path,

**All: Together.**

One: Separately, we each have our own story,

**All: Together, we share our story.**

Hymn: "I Love to Tell the Story" v. 1 & 2

NCH # 522

<b>A Continuing Conversation – Getting Started!</b>
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One: While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?"

**All: These are our stories. And together, they are our story. Have you not heard?**

One: And He walked with them listening to all that they said.

**All: Amen.**

Hymn: "I Love to Tell The Story" v.3 & 4

NCH # 522



**RESOURCE**  
**FOR**  
**The First Sunday Gathering**

A Continuing Conversation – Getting Started

## A CONTINUING CONVERSATION - GETTING STARTED!

This phrase – a continuing conversation seems to fit life in the local church. Here people meet in the same space, month after month, and talk and cope with shared concerns of their lives, faith and the world.

Today we begin a particular *continuing conversation*; namely, to talk about who we are as a community that is in transition and what it means to engage the future.

Conversation is not a matter of talk, talk, talk in order to avoid awkward silences. Instead, conversation is a way of relating to each other that embraces qualities such as openness, facing pain, and being loosened with laughter and delight. There are at least three practices, among others, that enhance and strengthen our capacity to be in real conversation.

### LISTENING

It may not seem sensible, but listening comes before speaking. Without a readiness to hear, words tends to be jumbled and either fuzzy or too loud. There is an old adage that says that without someone to listen there is no story. In the long run, listening makes speaking possible.

### RECEIVING

Receiving is more than taking in words. It means accepting what is intended to be said because we are seeking to be receptive to the person who is sharing [even when we don't agree with or share the excitement of the speaker]

### OFFERING

Within the context of listening and receiving, be willing to share your views, or questions, or your stories.

As these three practices are extended, and the conversation expands, the conversation will become deeper and richer and ***a continuing conversation.***

Every session in **50 Days of Short Term Interim Ministry – *Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God*** - is a time of continuing conversation and storytelling –

How will we tell the story of who our church is and what it does and where it is going?

## STORYTELLING

Here is a list of quotes to ponder

*"We are those who think in stories"*

*"Stories are events in a life"*

*"Story helps us find our way"*

*"Stories are the stuff of life"*

*"Every story is our story"*

Here are some exercises related to conversation and storytelling [can be done in small groups or as an individual exercise then shared with the whole group].

### 1. STARTING THE CONVERSATION

*"What is your name?"*

*"How did you first discover this congregation?"*

#### ADDING ON

*"If you were invited, who invited you?"*

#### GOING DEEPER

*"How did you discover the heart of this congregation?"*

### 2. STARTING THE CONVERSATION

*"What is your name?"*

*"What's your particular passion in this congregation?"*

#### ADDING ON

*"What happened that made you discover this passion?"*

#### GOING DEEPER

*"What difference has this passion made in your life or life around you?"*

### 3. THREE SENTENCE STORY EXERCISE

*Each of us will take about 20 minutes to ourselves to think of a time when we had an experience of God. If anyone does not have that kind of story, think of a time when you had a spiritual experience that meant something to you; perhaps it was a very peaceful time out in nature, or a time when you experienced a lot of love and care from someone. That story, like any story, has a beginning, a middle and an end. Our exercise is to take each of those three parts, and sum it up in one sentence. Take some time alone to do that."*

1. *Re-gather the group and tell them that now is an opportunity for anyone who wants to share their story to do so. Tell anyone to speak up when they feel ready. (Colleen Scheid: <http://www.buildfaith.org/2013/11/29/three-sentence-stories-build-faith-and-community/>)*

# ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

*A Journey for Small Churches in Transition*

## **Congregational Conversation #1**

***Meeting Our Church Again For the First Time***

*How will we encounter Christ in one another?*

(Have the **Wonder Wall** prepared with three columns

“I WONDER ABOUT...”

“This creates WONDER in me...”

“This is WONDROUS to me...”)

Invite people to add to this wall anytime during the Conversations and the Transitional Guidance Team will keep track and include or highlight as time goes by

### **Materials needed**

Bread and Juice for sharing

Newsprint and markers

3x5 cards

### **SCRIPTURAL FOCUS**

*When he was at the table with them, he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him. They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’* Luke 24:30-32

### **LITURGY**

**Hymn**      "The Time Was Early Evening" vs 1&2      NCH #344

One: When he was at the table with them, he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

*Sharing of Bread and Wine*

One: Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

**All: Were not our hearts burning within us - while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?**

- A. *Each Share: Where have we encountered Jesus in the life of this Church?*
- B. *Tell a story of when you experienced the most loving behavior among the people of this church. What is it that made you remember this - why was it remarkable, memorable?*

Record answers on newsprint

One: Jesus came and stood among them and said;

Second Voice: "Peace be with you!"

One: After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

- A. *Each Share: Where have we missed seeing Jesus in the life of this Church?*
- B. *How does bad behavior interfere with what God is calling us to do and be?*

Record answers on newsprint

One: And again, Jesus said;

Third Voice: "Peace be with you! As the Father sent me, I am sending you."

One: And with that he breathed on them and said;

Fourth Voice: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

(John 20:19-20)

## Creating a Covenant for Christ-like Behavior –

### How will we be with one another?

In 1629, the latest community of those coming from England to settle in the Americas the people of Salem "resolved to begin their Plantation with calling on the Name of the Lord." They appointed a day of fasting and prayer for three interrelated purposes: "the settling of a Church-State," "making a Confession of their Faith," and "entering into a Holy Covenant, whereby that Church-State was formed." Their agreement with each other was not a simple contract, but a covenant in which GOD was a party.

Probably the briefest covenant in American history, the Salem document nevertheless presumed that whoever owned it was in total agreement with the Puritan-Calvinistic arm of the English established church. Within a few years conflict within the colony forced the Salem community to draw up the Enlarged Covenant of 1636, which included specific articles encouraging harmony and fellowship (see The Enlarged Salem Covenant.)<sup>1</sup> Let's read the Salem Covenant of 1629 together.

We Covenant with the Lord and with one another and doe bynd our selves in the presence of God, to walk together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his blessed word of truth. (Salem 1629)

As the Salem Community needed to do in 1636, we are going to create an Enlarged \_\_\_\_\_church name\_\_\_\_\_Covenant of \_\_\_\_\_year\_\_\_\_\_ to remind ourselves of the specific ways God seeks God's people to walk with one another.

#### **Divide into groups of three**

*(provide 3 x 5 cards to groups of three and ask them to complete the sentences in the Enlarged \_\_\_\_\_(church name)\_\_\_\_\_Covenant of \_\_\_\_\_(year)\_\_\_\_\_ with words or phrases using the learnings shared and earlier recorded on the newsprint– or others words or phrases if need be)*

<sup>1</sup> Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1960), 197. And *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History*, ed. Donald S. Lutz (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 1998).

**THE ENLARGED** \_\_\_\_\_ church name \_\_\_\_\_ **COVENANT OF** \_\_\_\_\_ (year) \_\_\_\_\_

As a congregation we covenant to walk with each other in all God's ways,

We will show one another \_\_\_\_\_

We will speak directly to one another.

We will listen in order to \_\_\_\_\_

We will speak \_\_\_\_\_

We will respect \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

We will appreciate \_\_\_\_\_

We will help one another to \_\_\_\_\_

With the help of the Holy Spirit we will do our best to help each other along this journey of discovering our future life together.

**Litany** *Using the Enlarged Covenant*

**All: As a congregation we covenant to walk with each other in all God's ways,**

One: We will show one another

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

One: We will speak directly to one another.

One: We will listen in order to

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

One: We will speak

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

One: We will respect

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

One: We will appreciate

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

One: We will help one another to

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

**All: With the help of the Holy Spirit we will do our best to help each other along this journey of discovering our future life together. AMEN**

*Collect the 3x5 cards*

**Hymn** "The Time Was Early Evening" vs 3&4 NCH #344

One: Then they got up and went to Jerusalem, and told the others,

**All: It is true. The Lord is Risen!**

Passing of the Peace and Farewell.

TRANSITION GUIDANCE TEAM PREP FOR CONVERSATION #2

Process how the meeting went – reflect on what you learned – and how will it be helpful in going forward

Prepare a final version of the \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant of \_\_\_\_\_ to be displayed in the meeting space

Create a Litany of Confession for Worship the following Sunday using the \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant

Check the Wonder Wall and see where “wonderings’ need to be addressed, named or celebrated

Prepare a Time Line with decades for the last 100 years marked off leaving room for at least two more decades into the future. Have some significant church and world events already marked for the next conversation



## **The Enlarged Salem Covenant of 1636**

We covenant with our Lord, and one with another; and we do bind our selves in the presence of God, to walk together in all his ways, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his blessed word of truth; and do explicitly, in the name and fear of God, profess and protest to walk as followeth, through the power and grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

We avouch the Lord to be our God, and our selves to be his people, in the truth and simplicity of our spirits. We give our selves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the word of his grace for the teaching, ruling and sanctifying of us in matters of worship and conversion, resolving to cleave unto him alone for life and glory, and to reject all contrary ways, canons, and constitutions of men in his worship.

We promise to walk with our brethren, with all watchfulness and tenderness, avoiding jealousies and suspicions, back-bitings, censurings, provokings, secret risings of spirit against them; but in all offences to follow the rule of our Lord Jesus, and to bear and forbear, give and forgive, as he hath taught us.

In public or private, we will willingly do nothing to the offence of the church; but willing to take advice for our selves and ours, as occasion shall be presented.

We will not in the congregation be forward either to show our own gifts and parts in speaking or scrupling, or there discover the weakness or failings of our brethren; but attend an orderly call thereunto, knowing how much the Lord may be dishonoured, and his gospel, and the profession of it, slighted by our distempers and weaknesses in publick.

We bind our selves to study the advancement of the gospel in all truth and peace; both in regard of those that are within or without; no way slighting our sister churches, but using their counsel, as need shall be; not laying a stumbling-block before any, no, not the Indians, whose good we desire to promote; and so to converse, as we may avoid the very appearance of evil.

We do hereby promise to carry our selves in all lawful obedience to those that are over us, in Church or Commonwealth, knowing how well pleasing it will be to the Lord, that they should have encouragement in their places, by our not grieving their spirits through our irregularities.

We resolve to approve our selves to the Lord in our particular callings; shunning idleness as the bane of any stake; nor will we deal hardly or oppressingly with any, wherein we are the Lord's stewards.

Promising also unto our best ability to teach our children and servants the knowledge of God, and of His Will, that they may serve Him also; and all this not by any strength of our own, but by the Lord Jesus Christ; whose blood we desire may sprinkle this our Covenant made in his name.

# ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

*A Journey for Small Churches in Transition*

## **Congregational Conversation #1**

***Meeting Our Church Again For the First Time***

*How will we encounter Christ in one another?*

### **SCRIPTURAL FOCUS**

*When he was at the table with them, he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' Luke 24:30-32*

### **LITURGY**

**Hymn** "The Time Was Early Evening" vs 1&2 NCH #344

One: When he was at the table with them, he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

<i>Sharing of Bread and Wine</i>
----------------------------------

One: Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

**All: Were not our hearts burning within us - while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?**

- A. *Each Share: Where have we encountered Jesus in the life of this Church?*
- B. *Tell a story of when you experienced the most loving behavior among the people of this church. What is it that made you remember this - why was it remarkable, memorable?*

One: Jesus came and stood among them and said;

Second Voice: "Peace be with you!"

One: After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

A. *Each Share: Where have we missed seeing Jesus in the life of this Church?*

B. *How does bad behavior interfere with what God is calling us to do and be?*

One: And again, Jesus said;

Third Voice: "Peace be with you! As the Father sent me, I am sending you."

One: And with that he breathed on them and said;

Fourth Voice: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

(John 20:19-20)

### **Creating a Covenant for Christ-like Behavior – How will we be with one another?**

We Covenant with the Lord and with one another and do bynd our selves in the presence of God, to walk together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his blessed word of truth.

(Salem Covenant 1629)

*Divide into groups of three and together complete the following sentences with words or phrases using the learnings shared and earlier recorded on the newsprint– or other words or phrases if need be – on the 3x5 cards provided)*

### **THE ENLARGED \_\_\_\_\_ COVENANT OF \_\_\_\_\_**

As a congregation we covenant to walk with each other in all God's ways,

We will show one another \_\_\_\_\_

We will speak directly to one another.

We will listen in order to \_\_\_\_\_

We will speak \_\_\_\_\_

We will respect \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

We will appreciate \_\_\_\_\_

We will help one another to \_\_\_\_\_

With the help of the Holy Spirit we will do our best to help each other along this journey of discovering our future life together.

**Litany** *Using the Enlarged Covenant*

**All: As a congregation we covenant to walk with each other in all God's ways,**

One: We will show one another

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

One: We will speak directly to one another.

One: We will listen in order to

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

One: We will speak

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

One: We will respect

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

One: We will appreciate

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

One: We will help one another to

**(call out your words or phrases...)**

**All: With the help of the Holy Spirit we will do our best to help each other along this journey of discovering our future life together. AMEN**

**Hymn** "The Time Was Early Evening" vs 3&4 NCH #344

One: Then they got up and went to Jerusalem, and told the others,

**All: It is true. The Lord is Risen!**

Passing of the Peace and Farewell.

## **The Enlarged Salem Covenant of 1636**

We covenant with our Lord, and one with another; and we do bind our selves in the presence of God, to walk together in all his ways, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his blessed word of truth; and do explicitly, in the name and fear of God, profess and protest to walk as followeth, through the power and grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

We avouch the Lord to be our God, and our selves to be his people, in the truth and simplicity of our spirits. We give our selves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the word of his grace for the teaching, ruling and sanctifying of us in matters of worship and conversion, resolving to cleave unto him alone for life and glory, and to reject all contrary ways, canons, and constitutions of men in his worship.

We promise to walk with our brethren, with all watchfulness and tenderness, avoiding jealousies and suspicions, back-bitings, censurings, provokings, secret risings of spirit against them; but in all offences to follow the rule of our Lord Jesus, and to bear and forbear, give and forgive, as he hath taught us.

In public or private, we will willingly do nothing to the offence of the church; but willing to take advice for our selves and ours, as occasion shall be presented.

We will not in the congregation be forward either to show our own gifts and parts in speaking or scrupling, or there discover the weakness or failings of our brethren; but attend an orderly call thereunto, knowing how much the Lord may be dishonoured, and his gospel, and the profession of it, slighted by our distempers and weaknesses in publick.

We bind our selves to study the advancement of the gospel in all truth and peace; both in regard of those that are within or without; no way slighting our sister churches, but using their counsel, as need shall be; not laying a stumbling-block before any, no, not the Indians, whose good we desire to promote; and so to converse, as we may avoid the very appearance of evil.

We do hereby promise to carry our selves in all lawful obedience to those that are over us, in Church or Commonwealth, knowing how well pleasing it will be to the Lord, that

they should have encouragement in their places, by our not grieving their spirits through our irregularities.

We resolve to approve our selves to the Lord in our particular callings; shunning idleness as the bane of any stake; nor will we deal hardly or oppressingly with any, wherein we are the Lord's stewards.

Promising also unto our best ability to teach our children and servants the knowledge of God, and of His Will, that they may serve Him also; and all this not by any strength of our own, but by the Lord Jesus Christ; whose blood we desire may sprinkle this our Covenant made in his name.

## ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

*A Journey for Small Churches in Transition*

### **Congregational Conversation #2**

#### ***Be Not Afraid To Enter the Future***

*We are in a community with a past, present and future.*

*The great cloud of witnesses (past, present, future)*

(Have the final version of the \_\_\_\_\_ **Covenant** from previous session displayed).

(Continue to have the **Wonder Wall** available)

(Have a **Time Line** with decades for the last 100 years marked off leaving room for at least two more decades into the future.

Have some significant church and world events already marked.

Leave up for the next sessions to incorporate treasures of and for the future.)

(Continue to use the **Newsprint** to capture words and phrases

Why we've stayed

What treasure we want to carry with us

What does this mean going forward?

#### **Materials needed**

4x6 cards

Fine point pens

Straight pins

**READ** \_\_\_\_\_ **Covenant** together

#### **SCRIPTURAL FOCUS**

*But Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.'* Exodus 14: 13-14

*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*

*Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.*



*A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.*

*And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. Isaiah 40:1-5*

*But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. Isaiah 43:1*

## LITURGY

**Hymn:** O God Our Help in Ages Past

NCH # 25

One: Moses said to the people;

**All: Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today.**

One: But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you;

**All: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.**

## Creating a TIME LINE

A. Each person tell the story of how they came to the church (date and age), and one example of what has caused them to stay. (Provide 4x6 cards and a fine point pen) Write down the example and draw a stick figure drawing that represents both, give it a title and the date and place it on the time line. Tell stories along the timeline as the cards are pinned on the time line

Ask: What does it mean that we share this history?

Record on Newsprint

B. *If you could carry one or two best things from the past into*

*the future what would they be?  
What would you love to leave behind?  
As you look at the time line – what trend/dynamic/element of  
our life to this point gives us hope for the future?*

Record on newsprint

**Prayer** Create a Thanksgiving litany (on the spot) from the Newsprint

**O God, we give thanks for** (*lift up the reasons ‘why we’ve stayed’*)

**Response: We thank you for preparing our way forward.**

**O God, we give thanks for** (*lift up ‘the treasures we share’*)

**Response: We thank you for all that we carry with us into  
the future**

**O God we give thanks for** (*name the reasons why we have ‘hope for  
moving forward’*)

**Response: We thank you for giving us what we need to  
walk forth in faith. Amen**

**Hymn:** I Love to Tell the Story

NCH # 522

### SENDING FORTH

Voice One: Comfort, O comfort my people;

Voice Two: Speak tenderly to Jerusalem;

Voice Three: “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight the highway in  
the desert for our God.

**All: "Then the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall  
see it together!" Amen**

TRANSITION GUIDANCE TEAM PREP FOR CONVERSATION #3

Process how the meeting went – reflect on what you learned – and how will it be helpful in going forward

Clean up the newsprint and make one newsprint **list of treasures and hopes** to display for the next conversation

Create a **Call to Worship and Litany or Prayer of Thanksgiving** for treasures and a **Responsive Benediction** calling the congregation into their hopes for next Sunday's worship

Check the **Wonder Wall** and see what additional “wonderings” need to be addressed, named or celebrated

## ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

A Journey for Small Churches in Transition

### **Congregational Conversation #2**

#### ***Be Not Afraid To Enter the Future***

*We are in a community with a past, present and future.*

*The great cloud of witnesses (past, present, future)*

#### **SCRIPTURAL FOCUS**

*But Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.'* Exodus 14: 13-14

*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*

*Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.*

*A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.*

*And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.* Isaiah 40:1-5

*But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.* Isaiah 43:1

## LITURGY

Hymn: O God Our Help in Ages Past

NCH # 25

One: Moses said to the people;

**All: Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today.**

One: But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you;

**All: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.**

### Creating a TIME LINE

- A. *How did you come to this church (date and age) and one example of what has caused you to stay. On a 4x6 card write this down and draw a stick figure that represents both. Give it a title and a date and be ready to share your story as you pin your card to the time line.*
- B. *1. If you could carry one or two best things from the past into the future what would they be?  
2. What would you love to leave behind?  
3. As you look at the time line – what trend/dynamic/element of our life to this point gives us hope for the future?*

### A Thanksgiving Litany

**O God, we give thanks for**

*(lift up the reasons ‘why we’ve stayed’)*

**We thank you for preparing our way forward.**

**O God, we give thanks for**

*(lift up the ‘the treasures we share’)*

**We thank you for all that we carry with us into the future.**

**O God we give thanks for**

*(name the reasons why we have 'hope for moving forward)*

**We thank you for giving us what we need to walk forth in  
faith. Amen**

**Hymn:** I Love to Tell the Story

NCH # 522

### **SENDING FORTH**

Voice One: Comfort, O comfort my people;

Voice Two: Speak tenderly to Jerusalem;

Voice Three: "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight the highway in  
the desert for our God.

**All: "Then the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall  
see it together!" Amen**

# ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

A Journey for Small Churches in Transition

## **Congregational Conversation #3**

### ***Following Jesus forward***

*With what shall we create our future?*

(Continue to display the **Wonder Wall**, **Time Line**, \_\_\_\_\_ **Covenant** and **List of Treasures and Hopes**)

#### **Materials Needed**

Newsprint and markers

Four different colors of 3x5 cards and pins

**Colored blocks** pre-built into structures on each table of 4-6 persons

Copies of **Homework for Conversation #4** to take home

**READ** \_\_\_\_\_ **Covenant** together

### **SCRIPTURAL FOCUS**

*When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.”<sup>16</sup> A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.”<sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.<sup>18</sup> Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.”<sup>19</sup> (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”*  
(John 21:15-19)

**Colored block exercise** (instructions included in the resource section)

(Capture insights on the Newsprint for defining persistent values. What will help and what will hinder?)

## LITURGY

**Hymn:** This Is A Day of New Beginnings (Vs 1 & 2)

NCH # 417

One: When they had finished eating, Jesus said to them, "Do you love me?"

**All: "Yes, Lord; you know that we love you."**

One: "Feed my lambs."

*Share: What are the three most important events in the life of our church?*

*Tell a story about one of the most important events or happenings in the life of this church.*

*How have they defined you or shaped you as a congregation?*

*(Use a different colored card for the events and pin it on the time line as appropriate and add defining and shaping insights directly to Newsprint)*

One: A second time he said to them, "Do you love me?"

**All: "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."**

One: "Tend my sheep."

*What values have persisted in the life of this church over time?*

*(Using a different colored card for the values - pin to time line and/or Newsprint as appropriate)*

One: Jesus said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

**All: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."**

One: Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

*Reflecting back on these answers – How are they going to help or hinder our moving forward?*



(Using another colored card for help and another for hinder - pin to time line and on  
Newsprint as appropriate)

**Prayer Litany** (Again created on the spot from the Newsprint)

O God, for the stories of \_\_\_\_\_

**We say thank you, God.**

For the ways we have valued \_\_\_\_\_

**We say thank you, God.**

And now, O God, are you asking us to

\_\_\_\_\_?

**O God, make us bold enough to say YES – and find a way to do it! Amen**

One: Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.  
<sup>15</sup> And he said to them,

**All: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.**

Hymn: This Is A Day of New Beginnings (Vs 3 & 4)

NCH # 417

**HOMEWORK:** Hand out documents for Windshield surveys or Interviews to the congregation to prepare for the next conversation

**TRANSITIONAL PASTOR PREPARATION**

*During the next worship service while preaching on Proverbs 'Without a vision the people perish' give people 5 minutes to fill out 'Finding Words for our Vision' and collect them as an offering of prayer.*

#### TRANSITION GUIDANCE TEAM PREP FOR CONVERSATION #4

Process how the meeting went – reflect on what you learned – and how will it be helpful in going forward

Gather the **vision words** chosen during the worship service  
Group the vision words into **categories**

Clean up the Newsprint and create a list of **Defining Stories and Persisting Values** to display at the next conversation.

Create a **Call to Worship** using the images of what has shaped your congregation in the past, a **Prayer of Confession** for what has hindered you in the present and a **Benediction** naming the values that are calling you into the future for next Sunday's worship

Check the **Wonder Wall** and see what additional “wonderings” need to be addressed, named or celebrated

# ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

A Journey for Small Churches in Transition

## **Congregational Conversation #3**

### ***Following Jesus forward***

*With what shall we create our future?*

#### **SCRIPTURAL FOCUS**

*When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."<sup>16</sup> A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep."<sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."<sup>18</sup> Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go."<sup>19</sup> (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."  
(John 21:15-19)*

#### **Playing with Blocks**

Hymn: This Is A Day of New Beginnings (Vs 1 & 2)

NCH # 417

One: When they had finished eating, Jesus said to them, "Do you love me?"

All: "Yes, Lord; you know that we love you."

One: "Feed my lambs."

*Share: What are the three most important events in the life of our church?*

*Tell a story about one of the most important events or happenings in the life of this church.*

*How have they defined you or shaped you as a congregation?*

One: A second time he said to them, "Do you love me?"

**All: "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."**

One: "Tend my sheep."

*What values have persisted over the life of this church over time?*

One: Jesus said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

**All: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."**

One: Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

*Reflecting back on these answers – How are they going to help or hinder our moving forward?*

### **Prayer Litany**

O God, for the stories of \_\_\_\_\_

**We say thank you, God.**

For the ways we have valued \_\_\_\_\_

**We say thank you, God.**

And now, O God, are you asking us to

\_\_\_\_\_?

**O God, make us bold enough to say YES – and find a way to do it! Amen**

One: Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them,

**All: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."**

Hymn: This Is A Day of New Beginnings (Vs 3 & 4)

NCH # 417

**HOMEWORK:** *Choose to complete a Windshield survey OR  
Commit to interview one person in the community  
Bring your learnings to Conversation #4*

**RESOURCES**  
**FOR**  
**CONGREGATIONAL CONVERSATION #3**

Building Block Exercise

Windshield Survey

Interview

Finding Words for our Vision

Instructions

Vision Words in Alphabetical Order

Suggested Categories for Vision Words

Bulletin Insert #1

Bulletin Insert #2



## Table Talk with Blocks

An exercise designed by Rev. Susan Tarolli

Using a set of multi-colored, multi-shaped building blocks, create identical structures (not too easy, not too complex...10-12 pieces each) on two tables in the room. Ask the participants to find a seat at one of the two tables.

Leader: I am going to give you 30 seconds to consider the assembly of blocks in front of you. *(After 30 seconds,)*

Leader: Okay, please dismantle the structure on your table.

Leader goes to both tables and moves the blocks around on the table (just in case folks dismantled them in a particular way as to anticipate rebuilding!).

Leader: Now, you have two minutes to build the blocks back up. (It is important to give this instruction exactly like this.) If you finish before the two minutes is up, raise your hands. [By using this language, the groups most always assume that they are to build the blocks up as they were originally arranged and that it is a competition with the group at the other table. Both are incorrect assumptions.]

After giving this instruction, the leader should not speak again until the two minutes is up. Let the group process unfold as it will.

After the two minutes passes and presumably the groups are done, the leader facilitates discussion.

Possible discussion questions (write responses on newsprint):

- What were you thinking when asked to build the blocks back up?
- How did you begin?
- How did you determine who would build?
- Who was the leader? How did you determine the leader?
- What were important considerations when building?
- Did everyone participate? Why or why not?

After hearing how the group experienced the exercise, the leader reveals that they were not asked to build the same structure.

Leader: Holding observations from the exercise, and the interim time in your heart and mind, what would be some principles or lessons to keep in mind as we move forward through the interim? (Write responses down on newsprint.)

Leader: Identify something in the church life that might benefit from change. (Write responses down on newsprint)





## A WINDSHIELD SURVEY

Drive slowly (or walk) through the neighborhood around your church.

- What people do you see? What ages do they seem to be? How many males? Females? Racial or ethnic backgrounds represented?
- What are people doing? Why do you think they're doing these things?
- What buildings do you see? What is their physical condition? To what uses are they put?
- What are the positive aspects of the neighborhood?
- What improvements could be made?
- What else do you see?

From your survey, what would you say are three problems facing people in the neighborhood of your church? Why is each a problem?

Problem:

Why:

Problem:

Why?

Problem:

Why?



## **INTERVIEW**

Talk with one person in your community regarding concerns and needs. The interview may be done either by phone or in person.

This is a list of possible persons to be interviewed. Check with others to make sure that anyone interviewed is only interviewed by one person.

Local school principal  
A social worker  
Sheriff  
Representative of town government  
Local business person  
Real estate agent  
Someone living on welfare assistance  
Young person  
Someone over 65  
Pastor of another church  
Insurance person  
Barber or hairdresser  
Etc.

### **Suggested format**

Introduce yourself: My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm from the \_\_\_\_\_ Church. We are exploring ways we might better serve the community.

Then ask the person to state one or two concerns or needs that the community has in the area of \_\_\_\_\_. (Insert whatever area the person might represent: education, health services, agriculture, welfare etc. If the person is not a specialist simply ask about the needs of the community in general.)

Ask: Whose concern or need is it? (You want to know who is especially effected by the problem and who might be able to do something about it.)

Then ask: What as already been tried to satisfy this concern or need. (It's helpful to know what others have tried.)

Ask: What would be an ideal solution for the good of our community? (There are probably several things that would contribute to an ideal solution – so don't press for a single answer.)

Finally ask: What do you think our congregation might do to help with this? (Obviously your congregation can't take on everything – but there are probably some things that could be done.)

Conclude by thanking the person for his/her help.

Take notes to bring to the next meeting.

CONCERN OR NEED:

THOSE AFFECTED:

REMEDIES TRIED:

ONE SOLUTION:

WHAT OUR CONGREGATION CAN DO TO HELP:

## FINDING THE WORDS FOR OUR VISION

Together, if we search our hearts and listen for God's guidance, we can find a direction for the spiritual health and happiness of this church. Please circle three words that are important to you in visioning a healthy faith community. **Please add your own words if they are not included here.** These will help to prepare us for our continuing conversations about our future....

*friendly*, peaceful, *wholesome*, *faithful*,  
**inclusive**, inviting, happy, joyful,  
**teaching**, healthy, **servicing**, healing,  
*community*, humble, hopeful, *graceful*  
Caring, *Christian*, **equipping people for**  
**ministry**, SPIRITUAL GROWTH, *evangelism*,  
stewardship, **WORSHIPFUL**, holistic,  
servant, *smart*, supporting, **COACHING**,  
empowering, partnership in ministry, **BELIEVING**,  
**Biblical**, inspiring, safe, democratic, *open*  
*and accessible*, *prophetic*, *spiritual*,  
changing, dynamic, pastoral care **celebrating**,  
*diverse*, home, innovative, *growing*, **FUN**,  
visionary, **PRAYERFUL**,  
**DISCERNING**, educating, *generous*,  
creative, merciful, **CHRIST CENTERED....**

Other \_\_\_\_\_



## ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God*** **Visioning Process: Developing a Vision Statement**

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

*Prov. 29:18 (NRSV)*

“If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves;  
But when they attend to what God reveals, they are most blessed.”

*(The Message by Eugene Peterson)*

### **FINDING THE WORDS FOR OUR VISION**

This process is designed to be modified and led by the Transitional Guidance Team (TGT) and the Transitional Pastor.

It is important that the TGT review the following material and make sure that it is adapted for greatest effectiveness in their congregation.

1. Sunday liturgy and sermon/meditation focused on the character and significance of “vision” to the vitality of church life and ministry -
  - Introduce **‘Finding the Words For Our Vision’** and give worshippers five (5) minutes to complete the assignment as instructed, making sure that only three (3) words are circled.

Using the worksheet **‘Vision Words in Alphabetical Order’** the Transitional Guidance Team will score the number of times words were chosen. Prepare **Bulletin Insert #1** with a list of all the words which were circled (and the number of times they were chosen) from the most frequently chosen to those chosen by only one of two people and share it the following Sunday.

For the next Sunday, prepare **Bulletin Insert #2** with the Vision Words separated into categories of congregational life, again ordering the words in each category by the number of times they were chosen.

- 2 With the TGT (and Council if appropriate), identify the key notions of a vision that is emerging. How might they be articulated to name “heart of the church” (or its core values) and its call to mission and ministry.
- 3 As a result of that conversation, the Transitional Guidance Team will draft a VISION STATEMENT that describes who you are as Church and what you are called to do. Distribute it to the congregation and leadership agencies through whatever means are most inclusive and effective.



- 4 Present the Draft Vision Statement as part of Congregational Conversation #6 for final reality testing – understanding that the Vision Statement will be presented for adoption at the Called Congregational Meeting,

**VISION WORDS IN**  
**ALPHABETICAL ORDER**

believing	holistic
Biblical	home
Caring	hopeful
celebrating	humble
Changing	inclusive
Christ centered	innovative
Christian	Inspiring
Coaching	inviting
community	joyful
creative	merciful
democratic	open and accessible
Discerning	partnership in ministry
diverse	pastoral care
dynamic	peaceful
educating	prayerful
empowering	prophetic
equipping people for ministry	safe
evangelism	servant
faithful	serving
friendly	smart
fun	spiritual
generous	spiritual growth
grace-ful	stewardship
growing	supporting
happy	teaching
healing	visionary
healthy	wholesome
	worshipful



## **SUGGESTED CATEGORIES of Congregational Life reflected in the Visioning Words –**

List the words your congregation has lifted up under the categories that make sense in your setting (these suggestions or other descriptive words) in the order of their importance to your members and friends

### **Groupings**

#### **Our Community**

community  
democratic  
friendly  
home  
inclusive  
inviting  
open and accessible  
supporting  
diverse

#### **Our Faith**

believing  
Biblical  
Christ centered  
Discerning  
humble  
faithful  
prayerful  
prophetic  
worshipful  
stewardship

#### **Our Spirituality**

celebrating  
Christian  
healing  
holistic  
peaceful  
spiritual  
spiritual growth

#### **Our Outreach**

Caring  
merciful  
pastoral care  
serving  
generous  
grace-ful  
healthy

#### **Our Mission**

equipping people for ministry  
Inspiring  
partnership in ministry  
teaching  
visionary

#### **What Defines Our Life Together (Our Personality!)**

Changing  
Coaching  
creative  
innovative  
joyful  
dynamic  
educating  
empowering  
evangelism  
servant  
smart  
fun  
growing  
happy



Members and friends,

Thank you for responding so wholeheartedly to last Sunday's "visioning" effort. \_\_\_ response sheets were completed and returned. Below is the data. We have arranged the words and phrases in the order of their importance to the congregation. We look forward to working with this information to craft a vision for you to consider and refine.

Your Transitional  
Guidance Team

Members and friends,

Thank you for responding so wholeheartedly to last Sunday's "visioning" effort. \_\_\_ response sheets were completed and returned. Below is the data. We have arranged the words and phrases in the order of their importance to the congregation. We look forward to working with this information to craft a vision for you to consider and refine.

Your Transitional  
Guidance Team



Members and friends,

As we have continued to work with your responses to 'Finding the Words for our Vision', your responses are now grouped under several categories of congregational life. Again they are listed in the order of their importance to the Congregation. We expect to present a draft of a proposed Vision Statement to you at our next Congregational Conversation.

Your Transitional Guidance Team

Our Community

Our Outreach

Our Faith

Our Mission

Our Spirituality

Our Congregational 'Personality'

Members and friends,

As we have continued to work with your responses to 'Finding the Words for our Vision', your responses are now grouped under several categories of congregational life. Again they are listed in the order of their importance to the Congregation. We expect to present a draft of a proposed Vision Statement to you at our next Congregational Conversation.

Your Transitional Guidance Team

Our Community

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Our Congregational 'Personality'



# ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

*A Journey for Small Churches in Transition*

## **CONGREGATIONAL CONVERSATION #4**

### ***Who is our neighbor?***

*Naming our mission/passion/outreach – present and future*

(Display **The \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant, Time Line, Wonder Wall, List of Treasures and Hopes, List of Defining Stories and Persisting Values and Vision** words grouped into categories)

#### **Materials Needed**

Newsprint and Markers

**READ** The \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant together

### **SCRIPTURAL FOCUS**

*“And who is my neighbor?”<sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.<sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.<sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.<sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.<sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.<sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’<sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”<sup>37</sup> He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”* (Luke 10:29b-37)

### **LITURGY**

One: Who is my neighbor?

**All: The stripped, the beaten, the half dead.**

One: Who is my neighbor?

**All: A Levite, a Priest, a Samaritan.**

One: Who is my neighbor?

**All: An innkeeper, a Robber?**

One: Who is my neighbor?

**All: The one who shows mercy.**

**HYMN**      They Asked, “Who’s My Neighbor (v 1&2)      NCH 541

*Share: reports on their interviews and windshield surveys*

**(Note:** Transition Guidance Team – Collect any written interviews or survey)

*How would we describe our community?*

*What changes could we envision?*

*What major challenges exist?*

*Record on Newsprint*

*Now ask*

*What are the needs of the people in our community?*

*Where are people in our community engaged in serving others?*

*Where is the church engaged in serving others?*

*How does what we’re doing make a difference?*

*Who are our surprising partners?*

*What needs are not being met?*

*Record on Newsprint*

*Compare the two lists – Is there a connection – or is there a disconnect?*

*Now ask*

*What do we want to continue?*

*What is no longer working?*

*What new thing might be calling us to respond?*

**PRAYER LITANY** (Again created on the spot from the Newsprint)

O God, for our community of \_\_\_\_\_

**Open our eyes to see, God.**

For all that we hope will change \_\_\_\_\_

**Open our ears to hear, God.**

For all that will be hard to change \_\_\_\_\_

**Open our minds to imagine new possibilities, God.**

For all that our neighbors need \_\_\_\_\_

**Open our hands to make a difference, God.**

For all that we hope you will do through us \_\_\_\_\_

**Open our hearts to say YES, God.**

For all that is already being done \_\_\_\_\_

**We say thank you, O God.**

**Amen**

**HYMN**            They Asked, “Who’s My Neighbor (v 3&4)    NCH 541

### **SENDING FORTH**

One: Jesus asked. “Who is the one who is a neighbor to those who have a need?”

**ALL: “The one who showed mercy to the one with a need.”**

One: Jesus says, “Go and do likewise.”

#### TRANSITION GUIDANCE TEAM PREP FOR CONVERSATION #5

Process how the meeting went – reflect on what you learned – and how will it be helpful in going forward

Go over the collected interviews and surveys

Out of the conversations create a **List of Neighbor Needs** (to continue or contemplate) and create a **Responsive Reading ‘Remembering our Neighbors’** for worship next Sunday

Check the **Wonder Wall** and see what additional “wonderings” need to be addressed, named or celebrated

## ***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***

*A Journey for Small Churches in Transition*

### **CONGREGATIONAL CONVERSATION #4**

#### ***Who is our neighbor?***

*Naming our Mission/Passion/Outreach – present and future*

#### **SCRIPTURAL FOCUS**

*“And who is my neighbor?”<sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.<sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.<sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.<sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.<sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.<sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’<sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”<sup>37</sup> He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”* (Luke 10:29b-37)

#### **LITURGY**

One: Who is my neighbor?

**All: The stripped, the beaten, the half dead.**

One: Who is my neighbor?

**All: A Levite, a Priest, a Samaritan.**

One: Who is my neighbor?

**All: An innkeeper, a Robber?**

One: Who is my neighbor?

**All: The one who shows mercy.**

**HYMN**      They Asked, “Who’s My Neighbor (v 1&2)      NCH 541

## SHARING

- A. *How would we describe our community?  
What changes could we envision?  
What major challenges exist?*
- B. *What are the needs of the people in our community?  
Where are people in our community engaged in serving others?  
Where is the church engaged in serving others?  
How does what we're doing make a difference?  
Who are our surprising partners?  
What needs are not being met?*
- C. *What do we want to continue?  
What is no longer working?  
What new thing might be calling us to respond?*

## PRAYER LITANY

O God, for our community of \_\_\_\_\_

**Open our eyes to see, God.**

For all that we hope will change \_\_\_\_\_

**Open our ears to hear, God.**

For all that will be hard to change \_\_\_\_\_

**Open our minds to imagine new possibilities, God.**

For all that our neighbors need \_\_\_\_\_

**Open our hands to make a difference, God.**

For all that we hope you will do through us \_\_\_\_\_

**Open our hearts to say YES, God.**

For all that is already being done \_\_\_\_\_

**We say thank you, O God.**

**Amen**

**HYMN**            They Asked, “Who’s My Neighbor (v 3&4)    NCH 541

**SENDING FORTH**

One: Jesus asked. “Who is the one who is a neighbor to those who have a need?”

**ALL: “The one who showed mercy to the one with a need.”**

One: Jesus says, “Go and do likewise.”

***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***  
*A Journey for Small Churches in Transition*

**Congregational Conversation #5**  
***Discerning our Purpose and Identity***  
*Discovering Five Significant Things that can be said about Who We Are*

*(Display Wonder Wall, Time Line, The \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant, List of Treasures and Hopes, Vision Words Grouped, List of Defining Stories and Persisting Values and List of Neighbor Needs*

***Materials Needed***  
*Newsprint and Markers*  
*4x6 cards*

***Read The \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant together***

**LITURGY**

One: For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

**ALL: For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.**

**HYMN**                      God of Change and Glory (v 1&2)                      NCH 177

*Small Group Reflection: What is the Body of Christ called and able to do?*

*In the large group record reflections on the Newsprint*

One: Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say,

**ALL: ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’,**

One: that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say,

**All: ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body’,**

One: that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

**All: But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’, nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’**

One: that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

*Ask individuals to reflect – When I think of the Body of Christ as a physical human body, I feel called to be a part of its \_\_\_\_\_ (feet, nose, hand, belly?) and why?*

*Either:*

*Draw the body on newsprint and have people put their name on that part of the body...  
Or name where the parts of the body are in the room and have people go to the appropriate spot.*

*Go to each group and ask: Why?*

*Then ask: Who is missing. Who is not here that is nonetheless a part of this body?"*

*(Names, parts of the body not represented? What does that mean?)*

*Record those answers on the same newsprint*

One: Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

(I Cor. 12:12-20, 25)

*Note the lists: The neighbors identified in Conversation #4*

*Defining stories and persisting values from Conversation #3*

*Treasures from the past to carry into the future from  
Conversation #2*

*Vision Words grouped in Categories*



And now Answers to “What is the Body of Christ called and able to do?”

*On 4x6 cards – in pairs: study the lists hanging around the room and write down*

***FIVE SIGNIFICANT THINGS THAT CAN BE SAID ABOUT WHO YOU ARE AS A CONGREGATION?***

**PRAYER LITANY**

*Depending on how many groups there are – invite each group to share one or two significant things as a closing prayer litany – each offering followed by a group response “O God, may it be so...”*

**HYMN**

God of Change and Glory (v 3)

NCH 177

*Collect the cards naming Significant Things*

**TRANSITION GUIDANCE TEAM PREP FOR CONVERSATION #6**

Process how the meeting went – reflect on what you learned – and how will it be helpful in going forward

Collate the **list of significant attributes** - sort them into categories and prepare a newsprint list to hang up next week

Draft a **Vision Statement** – Over time this is who we have been and who we are – this is the community where God has placed us - this is what God is calling us to do and be – this is how we see ourselves living into that ministry

Write” A Confession of Who We Are” using the draft version of the **Vision Statement** for next Sunday’s worship

Check the **Wonder Wall** and see what additional “wonderings” need to be addressed, named or celebrated

**50 Days of Short Term Interim Ministry**  
***“Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God”***

**Congregational Conversation #5**  
***Discerning our Purpose and Identity***

**LITURGY**

One: For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

**ALL: For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.**

**HYMN**                      God of Change and Glory (v 1&2)                      NCH 177

*Small Group Reflection:*

*What is the Body of Christ called and able to do?*

One: Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say,

**ALL: ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’,**

One: that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say,

**All: ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body’,**

One: that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

**All: But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’, nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’**

One: that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

*When I think of the Body of Christ as a physical human body, I feel called to be a part of its \_\_\_\_\_(feet, nose, hand, belly?) and why?*

*Place your name on that part of the body...*

*Who is missing. Who is not here that is yet a part of this body?"*

One: Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

(I Cor. 12:12-20, 25)

*In pairs, study the lists hanging around the room – and on 4x6 cards - write down :*

***FIVE SIGNIFICANT THINGS THAT CAN BE SAID ABOUT WHO YOU ARE AS A CONGREGATION?***

**PRAYER LITANY**

*Depending on how many groups there are – invite each group to share one or two significant things as a closing prayer litany – each offering followed by a group response “O God, may it be so...”*

**HYMN**

God of Change and Glory (v 3)

NCH 177

***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***  
*A Journey for Small Churches in Transition*

Congregational Conversation #6  
***Discerning Leadership Change***

*(Display Wonder Wall, Time Line, The \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant, List of Treasures and Hopes, Vision Words Grouped, List of Defining Stories and Persisting Values, List of Neighbor Needs, the Body of Christ and List of Significant Attributes of our Church and a Draft Vision Statement*

**Materials Needed:**

*Newsprint and Markers  
3x5 index cards  
Colored Blocks*

**SCRIPTURAL FOCUS**

*In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. (Acts 1: 15,21-26)*

**LITURGY**

One: The time came, for those who knew Jesus, to choose another to join them in their witness to the resurrection.

**All: O Lord, You know our hearts.**

One: And so they prayed.

**All: O Lord, You know us inside and out. Help us to know who you send to us, to walk among us, to witness to the living love of Christ.**  
(Acts 1:21-26)

*Share: A possible vision statement*

*And reality test...what's missing...anything we can't all agree on?*

*Ask: What resources do we have that will help sustain and support this vision?*

*Report: Fiscal, property, community/church demographics,*

*Compensation guidelines*

*Small Group Conversation:*

*What will be the most important needs for ministry in the church and community that will claim our new pastor's abilities, gifts and time?*

*Identify the five most important and prioritize them in order of importance*

*Record on Newsprint*

*What will be the most important needs for ministry that will be met by the ministry of the congregation?*

*Identify the five most important and how they might be met by members of the church*

*Record on Newsprint*

**A CONFESSIOIN OF WHO WE ARE** *(Romans 12:4-8)*

One: For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function,

***ALL: ...so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us:***

One: ...prophecy,

***ALL: ...in proportion to faith;***

One: ...ministry,  
**ALL: ...in ministering;**  
One: ...the teacher,  
**ALL: ...in teaching;**  
One: ...the exhorter,  
**ALL: ...in exhortation;**  
One: ...the giver,  
**ALL: ...in generosity;**  
One: ...the leader,  
**ALL: ...in diligence;**  
One: ...the compassionate,  
**ALL: ...in cheerfulness.**

### **A STORY**

*The story is told about a woman who invited to dinner seven people who had the spiritual gifts of Romans 12. As she came out of the kitchen with the dessert, she tripped on a loose rug on the floor and the dessert was spilled all over.*

*Immediately, the person with the gift of SERVING ran to get a rag to wipe it up. The one with the gift of PROPHECY cried out, "Oh no, I could see it coming!"*

*The guest with the gift of COMPASSION ran up to the woman and comforted her, making sure she was all right. The one with the gift of ADMINISTRATION took charge over the clean-up. The one with the gift of EXHORTATION began to tell an encouraging and humorous story and they began to laugh.*

*Finally, as the guest with the gift of TEACHING instructed the hostess that the scatter rug would be less dangerous in another place – the person with the give of GIVING ran out the door to the convenience store across the street and bought a new dessert!*

### **REFLECTION**

*In these weeks we have been seeking how we might become the most faithful body of Christ we can be as we lean forward into God's Kingdom...what gifts of God do I think I am bringing to this work in progress?*

*Write those gifts on the index card. And exchange them around the circle...*

*One by one go around the circle and read the card you have been given...take three or four blocks and begin to build a holy temple of God – a body of Christ - from the gifts around this table. Each person will read and add to this new structure. When everyone is finished –*

*Large Group: Share and reflect on what this says about the shape and character of the church's expectation for ministry together*

*List on the newsprint*

**One:** And one was chosen.

**All:** And was counted along with the rest. Thanks be to God!

**Together in this place , by the grace of God may we be committed to becoming members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom we also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. Thanks be to God! Amen**

**HYMN** Shadow and Substance

NCH # 398

TRANSITION GUIDANCE TEAM PREP FOR CONVERSATION #7

Process how the meeting went – reflect on what you learned – and how will it be helpful in going forward

Check the **Wonder Wall** and see if there are any additional “wonderings” need to be addressed, named or celebrated in worship

Finalize the **Vision Statement** based on the conversation today  
Including the **Goals and Intentions for Moving Forward**

Write a **Litany** based on the Vision Statement for the close of the Congregational Meeting #7

Add the **Goals and Intentions** to the **Time Line**

Based on today’s conversation create a document outlining a

**Partnership in Ministry**

**Ministerial expectations**

**Congregational expectations**

Use information that has been gathered to fill out **Telling our Story**



***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***  
***A Journey for Small Churches in Transition***

**Congregational Conversation #6**  
***Discerning Leadership Change***

**SCRIPTURAL FOCUS**

*In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. (Acts 1: 15,21-26)*

**LITURGY**

One: The time came, for those who knew Jesus, to choose another to join them in their witness to the resurrection.

**All: O Lord, You know our hearts.**

One: And so they prayed.

**All: O Lord, You know us inside and out. Help us to know who you send to us, to walk among us, to witness to the living love of Christ.**  
(Acts 1:21-26)

**HYMN**      Be Now My Vision

NCH # 451

*Small Group Conversation:*

- A. *What will be the most important needs for ministry in and around the church that will claim our new pastor’s abilities, gifts and time?*

*Identify the five most important and prioritize them in order of importance*

*B. What will be the most important needs for ministry that will be met by the ministry of the congregation?*

*Identify the five most important and how they might be met by members of the church*

Record on Newsprint
---------------------

**A CONFSSION OF WHO WE ARE** *(Romans 12:4-8)*

One: For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function,

***ALL: ...so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us:***

One: ...prophecy,

***ALL: ...in proportion to faith;***

One: ...ministry,

***ALL: ...in ministering;***

One: ...the teacher,

***ALL: ...in teaching;***

One: ...the exhorter,

***ALL: ...in exhortation;***

One: ...the giver,

***ALL: ...in generosity;***

One: ...the leader,

***ALL: ...in diligence;***

One: ...the compassionate,

***ALL: ...in cheerfulness.***

**REFLECTION**

*In these weeks we have been seeking how we might become the most faithful body of Christ we can be as we lean forward into God's Kingdom... what gifts of God do I think I am bringing to this work in progress?*

*Write those gifts on an index card. And exchange them around the circle...*

*Large Group: Share and reflect on what this says about the shape and character of the church's expectation for ministry together*

<i>List on the newsprint</i>
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One: And one was chosen.

**All: And was counted along with the rest. Thanks be to God!**

**Together in this place , by the grace of God may we be committed to becoming members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom we also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. Thanks be to God! Amen**

**HYMN** Shadow and Substance

NCH # 398

***Leaning Forward into the Kingdom of God***  
*A Journey for Small Churches in Transition*

Congregational Conversation #7  
**A CALLED CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

**How Is It We Hear?  
How/ what is it that we do?**

*Display only the **time line** with the addition of the **Goals and Intentions** and the  
**The \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant***

***Materials Needed: Copies of  
Vision Statement  
Goals and Intentions for Moving Forward  
Partnership in Ministry Covenant  
Compensation Package  
Telling our Story***

***Closing Litany based on the Vision Statement***

***SCRIPTURAL FOCUS*** Acts 2:1-12

**LITURGY**

**HYMN**

*Bring Many Names*

NCH # 11

One: When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

**All: Suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.**

One: Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.

**All: All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.**

One: There were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.

**Round the table:**

*Parthians,  
Medes,  
Elamites,  
residents of Mesopotamia,  
Judea and Cappadocia,  
Pontus and Asia,<sup>10</sup>  
Phrygia and Pamphylia,  
Egypt,  
parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene,  
visitors from Rome,  
both Jews and proselytes,  
Cretans and Arabs.*

One: They were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each;

**All: How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?**

One: What does this mean?

*So what?*

*What is our story for the future?*

### ***Rip Van Winkle Wakes UP***

*Pretend that like Rip Van Winkle you fell asleep and wake up five years later.*

*You read in the newspaper impressive stories reflecting the ways the church has grown in this time. You are thrilled to be part of a movement that has made a difference for individuals and the community. What do you imagine the **three** most significant articles are about? What part do you play in these stories?*

*What are three most significant articles about?*

*What was my part in what has happened?*

*Share some dreaming out loud together*

***A commitment to engage in the vision!***

## **CONGREGATIONAL VOTES**

Approval: Vision Statement  
Goals and Intentions for Moving Forward  
A Partnership in Ministry  
Ministerial Expectations  
Congregational Expectations  
Compensation Package  
Telling Our Story

## **NEXT STEPS**

- *Conference staff will meet with Transition Guidance Team to prepare for interviews and receiving pastoral profiles*
- *The Transition Guidance Team will read profiles, interview candidates and will ultimately recommend a single candidate to the Congregation*
- *There will be a Congregational Meeting to call a candidate to be your pastor*
- *A new chapter of faithful ministry will begin*

One: So those who welcomed Peter's message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

**All: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.**

One: Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

**All: All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.**

One: Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

**All: And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.** (Acts 2:41-47)

One: The United Church of Christ acknowledges as its sole head,

**All: Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior.**

One: It acknowledges as kindred in Christ,

**All: all who share in this confession.**

One: It looks to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit,

**All: to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world.**

One: It claims as its own

**All: the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers.**

One: It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation

**All: to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God.**

## **PRAYER LITANY**

*(create a prayer litany out of the Vision Statement and Goals and Intentions Moving Forward)*

## **HYMN**

*Called as Partners in Christ's Service*

NCH # 495

### TRANSITION GUIDANCE TEAM PREP FOR NEXT STEPS

Process how the meeting went – reflect on what you learned – and how will it be helpful in going forward

Check the **Wonder Wall** and see if there are any additional “wonderings” need to be addressed, named or celebrated in worship

Forward all that has been approved by the Congregation to the Conference Minister working with your congregation.

Begin using all you have learned about your congregation to make a short check list of what your congregation needs in ministerial leadership – what gifts are present in the congregation and what gifts are missing – begin preparing questions for interviews and reference checks

You will receive 2-4 profiles of prospective pastors to choose from

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**A CALLED CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**  
*How Is It We Hear?*  
*How/ what is it that we do?*

**SCRIPTURAL FOCUS** Acts 2:1-12

**LITURGY**

**HYMN** *Bring Many Names* NCH # 11

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**CONGREGATIONAL VOTES**

Approval: Vision Statement

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Congregational Expectations

Compensation Package

**NEXT STEPS SHARED**

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NCH # 495